THE LIFE OF THE CRETAN PEOPLE PAST AND PRESENT

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Dear Guests,

It is certainly a bold undertaking to try to describe the life of the Cretan people, and to do so with the hope that you will find more of it intelligible than you find incomprehensible. Oswald Spengler, of course, was of the opinion that the foreign cultures as such are closed to us and that insight into them can only be gained by someone who possesses what he called "physiognomic tact", in other words, a personal gift as special as it is rare, that of recognizing, grasping and comprehending the world of alien times and peoples. Although I do not entirely share that opinion, what I have to say here should be regarded as no more than a first introduction, a guide to help you to get to know Cretans easily and at a deeper level.

The picture I shall try to present of social life in Crete will not, of course, be complete and exact, above all because the whole life of the people is involved in a rapid process of change. Details in the picture are altering, beginning to fade or even already disappearing, and the whole picture no longer quite fits into its original frame. One often gets the impression that what was still valid in the morning is already out of date by midday. This will probably prompt you involuntarily to wonder wether what I am telling you now is still valid, or wether it is not just an imaginary vision of the olden days. I would say it is both. You can find practically all of it even today in Crete, and at the same time easily recognize the process of change. You will have the opportunity, and can count yourselves fortunate, to get to know by personal experience living elements of ancient cultures; and then you yourselves will want to track down and discover more than I can indicate here. Of course, there are many kinds of discoveries, for example the archaeological excavations to be made in Crete in the course of a stay. But the most rewarding of all is to discover the Cretans, genuinely to get to know them and their life in all its aspects.

It is of course obvious that only a few features of Cretan national life can be illustrated here, only a few of the fundamental dimensions which in the past gave the people their character and are still decisive contributing factors. We could now consider more closely three of these dimensions, thoseof time, space and the sacred.

The Time dimension

By"time" I mean here (from the point of view of a doctrine of human nature) the framework of human existence which extends beyond the individual I, bringing the individual into harmony not only with historical reality but also with the mythical and with the eschatological. I shall now explain these perhaps rather complicated statements. Children in Crete are not educated primarily by TV and radio. The world they learn to know, through their parents or more often through their grandparents, is in fact the "legendary world", which although no longer present in reality, it is nevertheless an active source of nourishment for these children. They don't merely hear about this ancient world, they actually meet it here in Crete, From its very first steps the child as it were trips over stones which speak convincingly of that world. Consequently, in the Cretan mind, the idea of myth is by no means associated

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associated with unreality, with that void where the superstition and unbelief of modern man mostly finds lodging. Man comprehends not only what is visible, he is capable of perceiving far more than "what is real". Through this very powerful bond with the past, personal life in Crete today sees itself as a stage in a long drawn out drama and also of a very particular projection back into the past. What we mean is the ceaseless struggle for existence, which this nation has had to engage in in practically every century. The link thus established justifies one in speaking of a dramatic depth of experience spanning the ages, which the individual receives as an inheritance and an obligation. This experience is the real source of the abundant wealth of the popular mind which finds expression in the way of life and exuberance of spirit: for instance in proverbs, in jokes and banter. in a variety of customs - most clearly of all, however, in folksong, which here in Crete is still very much alive, and in the so-called "mantinades" (rhyming couplets of 15 syllables). "Alive" in this context means spontaneously created and anonymously handed on as folksong, or mandinada(as it is called).

Just how humanly enriching this is, can best be realized if one is present at a conversation in a coffee-house when joy and a glass or two of wine have invited the Muses to join the company; or at a baptism, a wedding or some other happy occasion. In that kind of atmosphere, Cretans can spend hours on end singing together about death and life, loving and hoping, everyday things or the eternal; and they will do so either by singing again old songs or mantinades or by creating new ones for themselves extempore to suit the particular need or circumstances. Cretans probably owe this skill mainly to the experience we have referred to; which concentrates and distile the wisdom of generations, and which is bestowed on them and entrusted to them as the highest gift of life.

This deep sense of time, drama and human experience ensures for Cretans a solid sense of continuity. Despite everything that might - and indeed must have - worked the other way, we can in fact speak of a continuity of human reality here. Tradition in Crete is a continuity of the biological, but above all of the spiritual; the total cultural reality of man, which has indeed been transformed in the course of time but never interrupted. Reality, far from being purely and simply an enrichment does in fact impose a twofold burden. On the one hand, a man knows he is responsible for that part and its gravity may weigh on his shoulders; on the other hand, that past operates so strictly as a norm for his whole life that the tie that binds him to his heritage, could be regarded as a distinct restriction on his personal freedom even amounting to a sacrifice.

Perhaps from your reading you have already learnt that in our Orthodox Church the eschatological outlook, the prospect of the fulfilment - or fullness of time according to the Christian promise - finds particularly strong expression. People have repeatedly come to know what "the fullness of time" means in their own concrete experience of the interconnection of past, present and future; and to think of themselves within that whole pattern. So it is not just the moment, the here and now, which is the stage of human existence, but the whole, the fullness of time in fact, in the perspective of which the meaning or meaninglessness of the momentary and actual is judged. Even in conversation with some ordinary person you can hear ideas which show no philosophical or theological speculation whatever about being and time. It might indeed be said that this dimension applies not only to the past but also to the future.

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The second characteristic feature essential to an understanding of the situation, I shall refer to as the spatial dimension. As an island,Crete is linked with the idea of space in two ways.

1. First of all the availbla space is limited, as on any small island; it feels cramped, hemmed in on all sides. That is a depressing fact which stands out quite clearly for instance in village life. Today, of course, the problem is no longer so acute, because many people are leaving the countryside. The rural population has become very much smaller indeed in recent years. But, earlier, up to the last war or even later, lack of space was a real problem and continually gave rise to serious conflicts in the life of villages, parishes and provinces. There was no adequate proportion between available space and size of population, quite apart from the fact, of course, that with working conditions and resources as they were then, agriculture could not be carried on intensively, scientifically and profitably. It should be born in mind in this connection that for seven centuries the Venetians and then the Turks kept the best land and the greater part of the country for themselves, while the Cretan population mostly had to withdraw to the mountain villages and the barron regions. There, Cretans had to wage a practically life-long struggle for existence on two fronts; one against the invaders (their tyrants), the other to defend their possessions - a small patch of land, meadow, water, or harvest, Even in ancient Crete there were fierce conflicts between towns and provinces, just as nowadays local intersts often give rise to disputes.

   It is easy to see how permanent tension of that kind can powerfully mark people's character as well as their whole life. Cramped conditions and conflict forces people out into distant pl places. Two things may be noted in this connection. Emigration (which will be dealt with in a moment) is here a consequence of lack of space, not of preference for town life or foreign lands, but rather the outcome of a certain hatred of the living conditions in one's own country. Secondly, in such harsh conditions people of necessity become vigilant, all their senses and faculties are str stretched, sharpened and occupied to the utmost.This explains, for instance, the urge for education which is characteristic of Crete, as is people's general watchfulness.
2. In another aspect, however, space is vastly extensive. An island is open on all sides; its horizons are wide. So the sea, the open sea, is of special importance for the social situation in Crete. The role of the sea in the ancient Cretan kingdom is well known; you know how much the geographical position of the island in the Mediteraanean has helped to determine its destiny. But the sea is, above all, the way to emigration a constant summons to depart. This largely gives a stamp to life and encoutages emigration. Individuals and families live, as it were, like migrants, especially when some member of the family is already abroad for then the whole family mentally migrates with him. Numerous Cretans work on merchant ships, others have settled in the USA, Canada, Australia, Africa and Western Europe, where they lead an admirable social life. These Cretans of the diaspora always feel themselves linked with the homeland and share in the life of the island in many ways, Driven by intense homesickness, they return again and again, and live with the dream of dying in Crete. One of the folksongs, for instance, goes: "My destiny, I beg you, do not send me abroad. And if you do send me there after all, do not let me die there. For I have seen how the stranger is buried abroad, without a candle and incense, without deacon and priest, and far away from the Church!" This constant going and coming does, of course, have good as well as bad influences on people's lives.

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Space also affects another feature of the Cretan character, which I should like to call its 'world-wide', 'ecumenical' nature. There are very few villages indeed in Crete that lie hidden from view in a narrow valley. Mostly they stand on hills, clinging to the mountain-sides or enthroned on the heights, with open horizons and wide vistas. Combined with emigration and with the fact that Crete throughout history has been like a bridge, a meeting-place of peoples and cultures, this is typical of the Cretans' wide-ranging, 'ecumenical' mentality. We are naturally not thinking here (or not primarily) of the ecumenical movement in the theological, ecclesiastical sense. What we mean is people's fundamental attitude to the external world. People here display lively interest in what happens outside their own individual lives. If you sit talking in a coffee-house or in fact anywhere in the company of Cretans, you soon get the impression that there are no secrets any more between you and your partners in conversation, and even that everything that happens anywhere in the world is an event in their own village. As in ancient Hellas so today, the most frequent greeting is not "Good morning" or "Good day", but "Ti nea?" or "Inta hambaria?". Both mean "What's the news?". We can certainly say that this curiosity, the ineradicable curiosity of the Greek, is typical of his character, as well as being a factor in promoting scientific knowledge, research, the quest of what is new. And so even in the daily round people do not remain shut off in themselves but communicate with the whole world, by striving to keep in touch with everything that is going on.

A third and last aspect that I wish to mention is the dimension of the sacred. You know that from ancient times Hellenism contra - sted oriental mysticism with Greek sobriety, and endevoured to free man from the powers of darkness and chaos. That did not always succeed, especially of course since controversy involves communication and consequent reciprocal influence, for good or evil. Man accordingly bears within him both the Apollonian and the Dionysian, the lucid and the instinctive. As we say in Christian terms, the old Adam and the new. Now in Crete contrasts are perhaps more strongly marked than anywhere else. Readers of Kazantzakis will readily recognize this antithesis, this tension in the character and life of the nation. Kazantzakis himself speaks indeed of the "Cretan view", of a special way of seeing and understanding oneself and the world; this consists in a summons of the utmost urgency to fight for matter to be transfigured into spirit, grub to butterfly, flesh to flame, as in the paintings of that other great Cretan, El Greco.

The survival of very old ideas from the world of myth and legend, demonic as well as holy, constitutes a central feature of what I have referred to as the sacred dimension. I do not mean that the Cretan people are particularly superstitious. Every nation is superstitious to some extent, and of course the less faith it has the more superstitious it is (and the modern man who makes himself out to be less of a believer undoubtedly lives in increasing superstition). But the wealth of legends and myths, and of traditional material generally, is still so powerful and alive here that profane reality is not able to attract people's whole attention to itself. We may say that positivism and pragmatism have not yet brought men so totally under their domination that their minds are closed to the metaphysical. Rather the contrary, in fact. Naturally we must take the role of Christianity into account here. The influence of Christianity on personal and social life is in fact so strong that we are justified in speaking of a liturgical consciousness that people have of themselves and the world; it is "liturgical" inasmuch as everything, personal and supra-personal, local and cosmic, is thought of in a wider context. Thus the cosmos is understood as

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the scene, and time as the course of the liturgical service of God. Individual lives are given meaning precisely by their relation to this liturgical centre. The goal of the liturgy is the fulfilment of the whole, the metamorphosis, the transfiguration into spirit, the 'deification' as a central concept of Greek Orthodox spirituality expresses it. This means interpretation in terms of the eschaton, and hence the fundamentally eschatological attitude among the Cretans to which I have already referred. Do not imagine that I mean to imply that the Cretans are therefore more 'pious' than others, or 'better' human beings. My remarks are intended to stress one thing only, namely that these people are perhaps more sensitive and open in regard to the 'metaphysical' than the modern man with his sheer 'facts'. In daily life, in mode of thought and behaviour, a mentality of this kind naturally plays an outstanding part.

I shall try to throw light on this phenomenon from another angle. The central doctrine of Christ's incarnation is experienced in a special way in the Orthodox world. We know that Christ the Logos 'became flesh and dwelt among us'. By this, what we have so far designated as 'metaphysical' has drawn close to us - a closeness of which people here in Crete are very much aware. In this sense we can speak for example of the popular character of the Church. This popular, familiar character is evident in all kinds of ways. When some visitors see a bishop celebrating the liturgy in full canonicals, they have the impression that that is a too-distant, alien world. In reality that is not how the individual here sees it at all. Both in the structure of worship and of the Church generally and in spiritual life, the closeness to which we referred is clearly perceptible. If you attend a Church service, you will realize that we have no place that is so 'sacred' that people feel themselves such strangers there and so overawed, that they must behave with strict discipline and formality. On the contrary, people feel at home, go out and come in again, talk and let the children run about and cry or laugh. That is even more obvious at a baptism or a 'panigiri' (a village saint's day festival). They are familiar with the Church, in fact, as the place to which a man goes just as he is, whole and entire, not merely half of him, or a pious person camouflaged in his Sunday best. One can carry that a little further and say that even the shape and arrangement of the building expresses that kind of closeness. It is well known that architectural form is the expression of an idea. What idea dominates the architecture of Orthodox Churches? I do not know what the master-builder of Cologne Cathedral had in mind when he planned that magnificant edifice. But as soon as an Orthodox enters that splendid cathedral he feels himself so completely overwhelmed by its magnitude that though his being is certainly elevated, it is also weakened and crushed. If, on the other hand, one enters the great cathedral of Eastern Christendom, The Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, one immediately feels the sublime to be so close, heaven so palpable, the light and everything so kindly, as immediately to convey the feeling of koinonia, of communion with the 'metaphysical', of confidence of being accepted and of the dignity of the human person. Such a feeling is of course even stronger in a small village chapel.

The three dimensions so far mentioned may make it easier for you to comprehend not only the past but also the present situation of our people. The dramatic background of history reveals the tension in the mind and heart of the present-day Cretans, for despite Crete's sacrifices for freedom, practically unique in the history of mankind, they once again see their freedom threatened by the play of internal and world political circumstances. And then there is the question of what the sudden erruption of industrialization, urbanisation, tourism, of modernity generally, means for a people in whose life tradition, no norms and previously constant values, have had such great importance.

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Now I can quickly indicate a few rather more concrete aspects of social life, not of course in detail, nor in any comprehensive way.

In the first placethere are the village, the parish and the community. these are basic concepts for understanding life in Crete. First of all, take the village in the form in which you see it, although even today it is no longer what it was. The most important element in village life is a strong feeling of community and solidarity. I spoke earlier of the cramped space and the conflicts it provokes. Despite these conflicts (people have learnt to live with them) and despite all the weknesses inherent in any small group of people, one is surprised at the richness and intensity of human solidarity and fraternity. This almost paschal picture of a living community was, of course, much more marked in the time of servitude. Solidarity among Christians was at that time their only safe weapon in the struggle for their own existence. But even in the organization of life generally, in the division of labour, in distress and joy, the villager is never alone, and never feels himself abandoned. This community spirit is still displayed in the social life of the people here in Crete in quite diverse forms, which are often unintelligible from a strictly logical viewpoint. It is shown by eager interest in other people's lives. To a Greek, the silence in a Western European railway train, for example, is completely incomprehensible. To start a conversation there, one has to travel perhaps several hundred kilometers, and even then the attempt usually comes to nothing. On the other hand if you meet someone here in the bus, the coffee house or even in the street, you will soon hear questions such as 'What's your name? Are you married? How many children have you? What is your job? How much do you earn?' Inside half an hour you know one another. Certainly curiosity of this sort is sometimes very irksome. But there is something more to it, a desire to share in the other person's life. And this does not apply only to the village but also to the townspeople. Similarly, the fundamental moments of life are not private matters but communal events - birth,baptism, marriage, emigration, homecoming, and death. If a woman is pregnant, she is the focus of village life and everyone discusses the matter, sometimes very facetiously. They discuss the husband, the wife, the whole turn of events. They joke, pass remarks, and above all utter prophecies! What will it be, a boy? a girl? (twins)? Despite all that they wish her a safe delivery, and when the child is born the village holds a fête and everyone takes part. Of course, it is much easier to share the grief of someone else, sympathize in their sorrow, than to share their joy, even in a society where daily life brings a lot of troubles and where people are rivals and competitors.

Cretan weddings are well known throughout Greece as something quite special, distinctive, splendid. I cannot describe the ceremonial in detail here. Formerly the wedding festivities used to last a whole week, sometimes even longer. You can imagine how many customs and traditional usages were to occupy the time. Nowadays this has of course (unfortunately) become much simpler. Nevertheless, even at the least elaborate wedding there will still be 2oo-3oo people present. If the marriage is on Sunday, they will often arrive on Saturday, some even on Friday, and not go away before Monday or Tuesday. These folk have naturally to be catered for somehow and found accommodation somewhere. They mostly sleep rough, but eat all the better for that! And there is no doubt they all drink a lot. But it all goes on at no cost to the bridegroom; the whole village is host to everyone. When one has a wedding, everyone has a wedding!

Another picture: the wedding-presents. After the marriage the priest stands with the'Gospel' beside the newly-married couple. People

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make the sign of the cross, kiss the 'Gospel', then the bridegroom and, if they wish, the bride as well - it is permitted - and congratulate them. The 'koumbaros', the best man, distributes small white sugared almonds (symbols of purity). By his side stands a relative with a tray on which people put a banknote. The sum collected helps the couple to pay the wedding expenses; in most cases something is left over for a good start. Those are only two of the many pictures of the community spirit and solidarity which we find not only at a wedding but at many other 'stages' on life's journey.

Let us pause for a moment at the final stage of human life. The death of one of its members affects the whole parish. In order to understand the significance of death correctly, we ought to say a word about how life is regarded here. For if, for example, death occupies a central place in Cretan popular poetry, this is probably as a protest and lament over the loss of life, which is what really moves the Cretan's feelings. The hard Dorian core of their combative nature reweals itself here in face of death, as dominated by Dionysian and even apparently almost Epicurean features. 'What is wrong with all of you round about, is your heart sad? Why are you not eating and drinking, why are you not merry, before Charos (death) comes to us, to rob us all ...?'

In one mantinada the protest turns against God himself. 'God is unjust, I can prove it. He gives us a life and takes it away again!' Hence the despairing lament: 'Since there is death and the body will decay, what is the use of life, even if it were twice as long?' Naturally, the contrary is also expressed: 'If you experience only one dawn, you have lived long enough. A rose that blossoms for long loses its fragrance!' Yet even here it is life that is in question, and a full life the quality of life would perhaps be the contemporary expression.

In immediate sequence we shall speak of the sense of immortality, and precisely in face of death. This immortality is indeed envisaged in terms of definitive seperation from 'this world': 'The Lord made the earth, He adorned the cosmos. Yet three things the Lord did not create in the world: THere are no bridges over the sea, and no return from the Hades, and no stairs up to heaven to go up and down on! Therefore, listen to what a young man declared from Hades: Rejoice you living, in the world up there; for here down below where we are, there is too little room. Here there are no pups, no charopopoi (revellers) and no targets for men to shoot at. Here there is only loam and mud, where are we to put the weight!' (Putting the weight is a favourite sport in Crete).

Yet the Cretan knows, like Kazantzakis, that while 'fruits and women are great joys', the meaning of life is only to be sought in great ideas. What are highly regarded here in Crete are, for example, kindness (a mantinada runs: 'Wealth and beauty pass, youth fades, only a kind heart will always hold the mastery'), friendship, sense of honour, courage, patriotism, freedom. These are existential categories which define the authentic content of life truly worthy of a human being. Consequently each of them has a value higher than life itself. They are not a merely theoretical philosophy of life and academic value-ethics; they are a rule of life by which people are to act. Not infrequently, human life is sacrificed or falls victim to precisely such categories. For instance, if personal or family honour is violated; and everyone takes it for granted that one's life is willing to be staked in the fight for freedom. The slogan 'Freedom or death' expressed in fact for centuries almost the only choice open to men on this island.

Whilst the Cretan, therefore, has to live on the edge of the abyss and constantly be prepared for death, death nevertheless remains a

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shattering event which sets the whole parish in ferment. It is announced by the special tolling of the bell. All work ceases immediately and the people of the village and neighbourhood gather in the house of the dead, where they remain until the burial, usually the next day. The men are there, but because usually there is not enough room in the house, they sit somewhere outside. They speak first of all about the dead, but then go on to talk about everyday matters and usually about politics. But at all events they are there, all night long. No one really may sleep. The women remain inside the house; they sit in a circle around the dead and bewail him. The moirologia, the Cretan dirges, are very moving both in sound and content. The girls often practise in groups or alone at home or in the fields, pretending that one or other living person is dead. These laments mostly consist of expressions of praise for the deceased, stories about his life, all in verses which the women compose spontaneously. The melody is linked to a certain rhythmical movement of the body. During this movement the verse has to be sung and it has to fit into context of the various verses. Each woman first sings something for the deceased; then she soon goes on to bewail her own death. Although, therefore, each women sings something different, they are all united in rhythm as a chorus. It sometimes happens that the women also raise some silly things, and this can cause some merriment. On the whole, however, they are moments in which the women display a rich poetic talent, and often profound reflection.

It is in these circumstances that one observe most clearly what I tried to express earlier: the closeness, the absence of barrier between the here and now and the beyond in the people's faith. One can see here, in face of the most naked and terrible reality of death, what resurrection and belief in immortality mean. Living and dead enter into an unbelievably living communion. One can say that death is an excellent opportunity for supra-temporal communication between people. For example, greetings are intrusted to the deceased to pass on to relatives. He is to tell those who are 'below' about everything that is happening in the 'upper world'; this is also a theme very frequently found in our folk-songs. They ask him to say this or that. One even hears quite often: 'Do not tell him the whole truth, that I am not well; tell him everything is all right, the cattle, the land; the trees are blossoming, the water is flowing ...'; in other words, care is taken not to cause pain the deceased by a 'factual report'. Sometimes, however, the opposite happens, and this is extremely interesting from the point of view of social control, as when for instance a widow gives the dead the task of telling her deceased husband how badly his relatives are treating her. By this, she indirectly but successfully initiates a process of social control. No one can blame her for making known an unpleasant situation in a momemt of grief. The relatives must now take seriously the ensuing criticism of the community. This parenthetical remark should not, of course, distract us from our main theme, which is that the suffering of one is that of the whole parish.

Coffee house and Church square are two of the chief places where sociability flourishes here in Crete. I need not say much here about the coffee house or cafés. You will discover and get to know them for yourselves. From the days of the ancient agora of the Athenians down to the present, this has been the place of all others where people meet, and the great school of the nation.

The importance of the Church square, churchyard or open space at the Church doors, has been and still remains considerable. After the services, people linger for a while together and talk over various problems of their lives, in the mental atmosphere created by the liturgy. Often far-reaching decisions have been taken here, so that

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the churchyard has been rightly called the real parliament of the Greek people.

These pictures are not intended, of course, to idealize the situation as a whole. There are also many forms of human egoism which do not exactly promote community spirit, but rather destroy it. Precisely from the point of view of community, spirit and solidarity one can observe the great revolutiin that is emerging in all spheres of life in the form of modern individualism - egotistical, selfish, destructive of the old ways. Until recently, for instance, every family in the country had only one ox or cow, so there was less work and less expense fpr upkeep. In winter, the family would cooperate with another, and with their two oxen they would do the ploughing and help each other, which was much more prcfitable. Nowadays, each man wants to have his own tractor, which he only really uses for a very short time; still technically unskilled, he soon lets the machine go to rust. You will understand that in general the change from community to individualism often makes sensible collaboration (for instance co-operatives, joint enterprises, etc.) very difficult. Precisely at this point the Orthodox Academy is making particulary strenuous efforts. You will also understand what the disintegration of the community means for a Church like ours, which is known as the"Church of Johannine Christianity", which means, among other things, a "Church of community".

The smaller forms of community, family and relatives, are today in process of change. In Greece we still have a fairly strong family, even extended family. Here, blood-relationship plays a large part. In a way we still have partiarchalism, with all forms of authority, full powers and total responsibility. Here the word "father" has an almost "Yahwist" gravity. On the whole the family still possesses that kind of solidarity and mutual responsibility. For example, the parents are still responsible for their children's upkeep until they can go their own way independently. But the children, too, have a responsibility for their parents. In the eyes of society they are humiliated to some extent if they put their parents into an old people's home. There are such homes, but really only for extreme cases, cases of need.

Furthermore, the family is responsible for the so-called "apokatastasis" of the daughters. What is meant is their marriage, and even more precisely their dowry, the marriage settlement, which with us is still an unshakable part of the fabric of society. If the girl marries, then, she must get something, which often means a share in the land, sometimes more than a fair share, depending on the daughter's other qualities. There is a certain amount of haggling over this, especially if the marriage is contracted in the old way by negotiation and arrangement. Formerly, girls had to learn from earliest childhood that "If my parents want it, so dO I!" This tradition is still in force, sometimes so unrestrictedly that girls of only fourteen years of age or even less are betrothed solely by their parents' decision. We even have the particularly gifted type of man or woman who is very skilful at initiating the whole business of mediation and negotiation. The dowry is, of course, jeopardized if the young people decide on their own, which is more and more the case. Here the family may in the first place agree, without incurring any financial commitment. Later, of course, this point, too, is usually settled.

The family feels itself responsible, above all, for the future of its female members. The old custom is still practically as strongly in force as ever, where- by the brother may not marry before all his sisters are married,even if he is the eldest in the family. To act otherwise would be to bring discredit on him when he came to choose his own wife. People would say, if that is the sort of family spirit you have, I am not entrusting my daughter to you. So it is not a simple matter if one has a sister or several. A cousin of mine had eleven,

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all younger than himself, and he waited till all of them were married.

In 1961, I think it was, I published an article in a German newspaper which at the time caused a certain stir, under the title "Foreign workers for the sake of a dowry". In fact there are a number of Greeks in Germany and elsewhere abroad who are working primarily to save money for one or more of their sisters. People are astonished that this money, representing six or even ten years' work, should go to another man. But that is precisely the fulfilment of a fundamental obligation inside the family circle. In this light you can view with greater understanding the position of men who have to work from such motives in what for them are extremely hard conditions.

From what has been said you will have already been wondering what exactly is the position of women in our society. Foreigners are apt to pass sweeping judgments on this point. For instance, they hardly ever see any women in the cafés, and immediately think that women are oppressed and discriminated against here, and similarly when they see women working in the fields, putting the cattle out to pasture, going home with firewood piled on their shoulders. Women are certainly not put on a par with men in family and society. I have already spoken of patriarchalism. Leaving aside the fact that nowadays legislation as well as social change generally is tending to put men and women on a footing of equality in every sphere, one cannot ignore the fact that even in our traditional patriarchalism, women occupy as wives and mothers a high and often decisive position in the life of the family, although as daughters they are considerably restricted and perhaps even oppressed. Even in the history of our nation women have played a great part in many important capacities. At the same time, women naturally live in and with the family, sharing in its entire life, including the work. Taken all in all, one may probably say that if the responsibility of men for womenfolk and all that this entails is rightly estimated, women here have protection and security of a kind which no so-called emancipation will ever be able to give them. This is not to say, of course, that the position of women, especially in the older Cretan society, is the ideal. Quite the contrary. But one may well be just as concerned about the fate of women who are now confronted with unlimited demands and all kinds of burdens in the life of modern society.

The solidarity of the extended family compels every one of its members to share in its entire life. An immediate proof of this is the blood-feud or vendetta. The vendetta is found in all societies where a strict system of public justice does not function properly or at all. People then feel called upon to pass judgment and exact retribution for themselves. You will understand that a nation which for so many centuries had lived under foreign domination - as it were without laws, regarding illegality as its first duty and rejoicing when it could transgress the tyrant's laws - was always in danger of developing laws of its own and acting on them. In our particular instance the vendetta was also a sort of emergency measure designed to defend the extended family and its pride, this pride, too, being a means of preserving the family. We unfortunately know cases where whole families have exterminated one another in these feuds. Nowadays that no longer happens very often; if it does, the police of course immediately intervene. Formerly, however, the vendetta assumed serious proportions. Hence the great importance that was attributed to the role of the priest as peace-maker.

Permit me a few futher remarks on other kinds of relationship, first of all blood-brotherhood. This is no longer so frequent, but still not entirely unknown. It consists in mingling the blood. An incision is made in the veins and the hands are placed on the wound in the form of a cross. The blood of one mingles with the blood of

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the other, thus establishing blood-brotherhood. The motives are various, for instance reconciliation after serious conflicts. The conflict is settled for ever, and it is scarcely conceivable that the two blood-brothers and even their extended families should ever seriously fall out after that. Another motive is to establish joint responsibility. In former times, in the days of fierce fighting when for instance the leaders of a revolt needed to keep preparations secret, they would practise this blood-brotherhood rite. It mostly took place at the altar of a small chapel, somewhere on a mountain, and so constituted something like a liturgical act. Another possible motive is friendship between two men which is so precious that both are afraid it might sometime come to naught, and so they have recourse to the symbolic action of eternal blood-brotherhood.

Another, much more frequent form is the spiritual relationship that arises from the functions of witness to a marriage and godfather at baptism. The godfather in relation to the child's parents is called "synteknos". "Syn", means "with", "together", and "teknos" is the child. The synteknos is therefore the man who has, so to speak, joined in bringing the child to birth. For baptism is the new, true birth, and he is therefore the second father, just as Paul said to his disciples: "I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel". The godfather has the same responsibility as the father himself. If the father is not there, he must assume full responsibility for the child. He is responsible above all for the child's upbringing in the Christian faith. As with a lot of things, this is of course not always carried out properly in practice. This relationship, however, is almost more binding than blood-brotherhood, and holds good even in our civil law. Consequently we have a big problem if someone is godfather to a girl and o boy and the two do not know this and get to know one another later on, for they are brother and sister and cannot marry. Consequently it is advisable to stand sponsor at baptism only to girls or only to boys. Thus baptism is not solely spiritual in character, but social as well; it creates new relationships and friendships in society.

In conclusion, perhaps I may say a word about Cretan hospitality. Probably you have already heard that hospitality, though a universal human sentiment, is particularly prominent here in Crete. The very etymology of the word in Greek is interesting. Philoxenia means of friendly feeling towards a stranger. But a stranger is precisely someone I don't know, the person I have to be careful about, treat with caution, whose origins and intentions I need to make sure of. Really, then, the stranger is someone I tend to be afraid of, who has to be treated with reserve. To call just any human being friend, and to welcome him as a friend, is certainly rather unusual.

This unusual feature is just what we do find in Greek hospitality, which, as we have said, is very spontaneous here in Crete. Characteristically the guest is called "mousaphiris", which again is an interesting compound-noun. "Mousa" is the Muse and "phero" means to bring. The guest, then, the mousaphiris, is a person who brings the Muses to us, all the goddesses in whose company leisure itself receives meaning and content. He bestows on us joy, company, honour. We are the recipients, we owe him thanks. This probably distinctive, certainly humane, attitude is undoubtedly a survival from the well-known friendliness towards strangers in antiquity, but it is certainly also a fruit of Christian sentiments. I shall not deny, of course, that egotistical motives may sometimes be involved. For instance, a stranger arrives in the village and goes into the café. Several people soon invite him to be a guest in their house. The man who finally wins him certainly feels rather proud. Despite such less admirable motives, hospitality is nevertheless a characteristic of the Cretans, for which

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we are very thankful. Sometimes the hospitable attitude even takes extreme forms. It may involve, for example, concealing great grief and sufferings in the life of the house, even of mourning. I shall conclude my account by drawing a parallel for you between ancient Hellas and modern Crete. In the tragedy of Euripides, Alcestis, Heracles comes to King Admetus of Pherai and is his guest. The King had been told in an oracle that he would die young unless another human being was willing to die in his place. Alcestis, his young wife, has in fact done so. Heracles comes on that very day to the palace of Pherai. He notices at once that something serious has happened, that the house is in mourning. He asks Admetus what is wrong. The king at first will not say anything, but Heracles insists, so Admetus tells him that a woman of the household has died. He therefore asks Heracles to go to his apartment, and gives orders for the inner doors to be kept shut so that Heracles will not hear the groans and weeping. He has the best food and good wine set before him, and keeps him company as long as he can. The next day Heracles falls into conversation with a soldier, who is very melancholy. Heracles asks, "Are you all sad about the death of a serving-woman in the house?" The soldier, knowing nothing of what has gone before, reveals the secret that the dead woman is Alcestis herself. Filled with admiration for Admetus's great hospitality, Heracles decides to go to the underworld. There he conquers Thanatos (death) and brings Alcestis back as a reward for the king's noble action.

The same theme of hiding mourning is not unknown in modern Crete. It sometimes happens that someone dies during wedding festivities, and if at all possible this is not announced, so as not to spoil other people's joy. Kazantzakis relates that he once came to a priest's house and never realized that the priest's wife lay dead in the next room. He only learned of the death the next day in another village.

A Cretan folksong with which I should like to conclude, expresses the wish of a dying boy as follows:
"Mother, if our friends come and our relatives, do not say that I have died, do not make them melancholy; lay the table for them to eat, make up a bed for them to sleep, clear the sofa so that they may lay down their weapons there. Tomorrow, when they get up and say farewell to you, tell them then that I am dead".

(February 1978)